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Review of *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, edited by R. Dodaro and G. Lawless

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G. J. P. O'DALY, *AUGUSTINE'S CITY OF GOD: A READER'S GUIDE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999. Pp. xii + 323. ISBN 0-1982-635-6. £48.00.

If they are capable of it — and Augustine would unhesitatingly have said that they are not — there may be thousands or even millions of saints in the heavenly city cursing their luck that they lived too early for their guidance into the City of God to have come through O'Daly. And those who attached themselves to the other city — a mere *urbs*, if an *orbis* too — will certainly appreciate this guide as well. It is an expert and well-judged study, and one long needed. Like a patient and clear-headed Vergil or Beatrice, O'D. has a sure touch in helping the reader and a sensible idea of his readers' stamina. The book-by-book expositions, which take up more than one half of this work, are very clear. They do not avoid problems, such as those surrounding demons in Book 10 or the use of Varro's *De Philosophia* and the matter of Augustine's political views in Book 19, but are gently supportive; one is assured, for example, that 'book 11 is not an easy book'. As well as giving the main contents and arguments of each book O'D. attends where necessary to the detailed questions that Augustine often asks, whether out of attention to plain commonsense or to his opponents' sniping, or both: what is the significance of the reference to Cain's founding a city when the world's population was just three? How would human self-propagation have occurred if the Fall had not taken place and desire come to drive bodily organs? Or with difficult cases of ingenuity in Biblical exegesis: 'the ungodly will walk in a circle' (148). He is capable of a light touch, as when he refers to 'a divinely ordained airlift' (172: how animals reach islands after the Flood) or to the possibility of 'thermostatic control' in Hell (221).

Various other aspects receive attention, both particular — I pass over the chapters 'The Making of the Book' (2), 'The Structure of the Work' (5), 'The Place of the *City of God* in Augustine's Writings' (12) — and more general in focus. In the first chapter, 'Cities Real and Desired', O'D. attempts, first, to give a brief outline of what he calls the 'realities of life' in the Christianized Empire. Perhaps criticism of detail is unreasonable when so much is attempted in a small compass, but statements like 'a law of 392 is still attempting to extirpate it' (sacrifice) might well create misconceptions among those new to the problems, while (as O'D. rightly notes), the *audientia episcopalis* (8) was a short-lived institution, and perhaps not very significant in practice. In the same chapter he shows how literary discourse about society and religion often took the form of discussions of the city, examining the ideological assumptions behind the controversy over the Altar of Victory, and the rhetoric of poems of Claudian and Prudentius. Rome is *urbs*, as often as not; anyone who may be wondering why Augustine used the word *civitas* in the title is referred to Appendix A, and will find that it was the translation of *polis tou theou* in various passages in Latin translations of the Bible available to Augustine. In ch. 3 there is a useful survey of 'The Apologetic Tradition' — a theme which elsewhere is at last beginning to receive detailed study — together with a short introductory bibliography. Another chapter traces the theme of the two cities in religious writing before Augustine and in Augustine's other works. There is an illuminating though (again) concise chapter surveying 'Influences and Sources'; while notably good on Sallust, it omits to consider a handful of references to the speeches of Cicero (all, unsurprisingly, early speeches against Catiline: see Hagendahl (1967)). Our guide ends with a bibliography of texts and secondary studies, which as far as I can see is as full, accurate, and up-to-date as it reasonably could be.

University of Glasgow

ROGER GREEN

R. DODARO and G. LAWLESS (EDS), *AUGUSTINE AND HIS CRITICS. ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF GERALD BONNER*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Pp. xiii + 270. ISBN 0-415-20062-8. £55.00.

Augustine has always encountered vigorous criticism. To much of this criticism he himself responded with zest and flair; since his death, both his critics and his defenders have been too apt to convert zest to zealotry. A Festschrift entitled *Augustine and his Critics* runs the risk, then, of simply drawing up the same old battle lines, and sniping at opponents from behind them; and it is perhaps a surprising choice of tribute to a famously 'eirenic' (1) and 'gentle' (10) scholar. (Perhaps that is why the delicate work of Gerald Bonner is an elusive presence in these essays, though there is a brief 'appreciation' and bibliography by Daniel Hardy; and Wetzels, explicitly developing an insight of Bonner's, shows beautifully how Augustine 'disrupts the delicate *pas de deux* of Western theism, between ethical self-assertion and religious self-surrender' (ch. 8: 124–5).) The editors modestly draw attention (4) to some important topics left unrepresented; but Augustine's notoriously embattled positions on sex, women, free will, classical culture, and political authoritarianism are all here.

The most successful of the essays, to my mind, are those which evade the risk of merely surveying the traditional battle lines by examining specific criticisms, or by attempting explicitly to reframe the terms of the debate. Williams' examination of Kathleen Sands' feminist perspective on

evil (ch. 7) is thus more satisfying than Matter's survey of recent scholarship on Augustine and women (ch. 10); and Dodaro's rebuttal of William Connolly on Augustine's political authoritarianism — using a close reading of the correspondence with Nectarius about *caritas patriae* — is particularly effective (ch. 14). Of those who reframe the debate, Ayres (ch. 5) and Williams (ch. 7) both concern themselves with articulating 'grammars', of trinitarianism and of evil respectively: the effect is not only to clarify the terms of the discussion, but to remove some of the traditional grounds of criticism altogether. Milbank too (ch. 6) is concerned with the 'grammar' of trinitarianism, though he does not use the word — but his much more general interpretation, in the context of alleged tripartite ordering structures in Indo-European thought, is less to the purpose. Markus shows Augustine's intellectual isolation in his idea of Christianization as 'starkly ambiguous' (ch. 12, 206).

Several of the essays do survey the old critical battle lines, but each has something new and subtle to contribute: Crouse (ch. 4) traces the 'Hellenizing' of Christianity to Budaeus in 1535; Carol Harrison (ch. 13) represents delight as the ordering aesthetic of Christian, as opposed to classical, eloquence; Lawless is judicious on asceticism (ch. 9), telling us that 'the mature Augustine was chary of rules' (144); Lamberigts' reprise of the debate with Julian of Eclanum is rather familiar (ch. 11), but alludes delightfully to an undated sermon which equates the sin of non-procreative sex with intemperate laughter or a harsh word. Finally, Drobner's 'overview of recent research' (what an unenviable task!) is terribly brief, but contains many useful bibliographic leads in the footnotes (ch. 3).

The text is in general well produced, bar one misleading error: 'meditation' for (presumably) 'mediation' (41); and one hopes that Gerald Bonner is pleased with this thoughtful and polished set of offerings.

University of Manchester

CATHERINE CONYBEARE

P. ATHANASSIADI, *DAMASCIUS: THE PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY. TEXT WITH TRANSLATIONS AND NOTES*. Athens: Apamea Cultural Association, 1999. Pp. 403, 6 pls, 1 map. ISBN 960-85325-2-3. £25.00/US\$45.00.

Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, or *Philosophical History*, as Polymnia Athanassiadi insists on calling it, is the intriguing, yet hardly preserved, account of the lives and times of the pagan Neoplatonic communities in Alexandria and Athens at the very end of antiquity, structured around the biography of Isidore, Damascius' teacher. All that is left of its sixty chapters are excerpts, not necessarily entirely faithful to the original text, as they have been preserved in Photius' *Bibliotheca* and Suda. A. has now undertaken a reconstruction of the text together with an English translation and notes. The reconstruction is preceded by an introduction of some sixty pages, which discusses the work and the figure of Damascius, and puts forward the principles of the reconstruction of the text. One may quarrel over some minor details in the introduction (I doubt, for example, whether the imperial edict of A.D. 529 was 'specifically aimed at Damascius' establishment', since it also forbade the teaching of law in Athens), but the real bone of contention is the principle of her reconstruction.

Photius had excerpted the text for doxographic purposes and then went through the work once more in order to add to his anthology passages that he thought worthwhile on stylistic grounds. A., quite rightly, takes the excerpts of the first Photian reading as the spine for the reconstruction of the text. However, she collates these with the equivalent passage or passages from Suda and from the alternative Photian reading. Her main objective in doing so is to produce a readable text, for the alternative is to do as C. Zintzen had done in his 1967 edition and present the various versions of the text separately, one next to another. For that reason, it is recommendable to keep Zintzen's edition at hand, when using A.'s.

Be that as it may, A.'s version of the work will be an attractive one to many. Her fine translation and notes make it all the more accessible. It will no doubt kindle the interest of students of Neoplatonism and historians of late antiquity in what is an important source for late Greek intellectual history.

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